

**DRAFT**

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# HOW NOT TO TEACH A CLASS

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**M**y first duty as assistant professor at Occidental College was to attend an orientation for new faculty. There we were bestowed with advice from senior faculty, including a history professor who warned us that we ought to keep a box of tissues on hand for the students who get emotional discussing the material. My immediate thought was that the students in a history class might get emotional about racism and genocide, but the students in my classes—Research Methods and Cognitive Psychology—couldn't possibly get emotional about counterbalancing techniques for a repeated-measures design or empirical methods for studying the time course of auditory perception. If those topics bring you to tears, it's tears of boredom not tears of sorrow. Little did I suspect that only three weeks later I would be consoling a weeping student. She wasn't weeping about the material, of course. She was weeping about her grades. Thus began what I now affectionately refer to as my "semester from hell," or "SFH" for short. It was the first semester I taught my own courses, as opposed to assisting someone else, and it was the first semester I discovered that being a teacher requires as thick a skin as being a researcher, if not thicker.

I began the semester expecting that my only real challenge lay in determining what content to teach and how to teach it. But the more significant challenge, I came to realize, was determining what my students expected of me and how to manage those expectations. There's a "strategic" or "tactical" dimension to teaching that no one warns you

about or prepares you for, and it's this dimension that caused me the most grief in my SFH.

Some of the errors I made that semester are embarrassingly naive, but I recount them nonetheless in the spirit of full disclosure. I've organized my errors into a set of six big "don'ts": *don't* let students call you by your first name; *don't* be too specific about your grading criteria; *don't* offer to read drafts; *don't* hand back an exam at the beginning of class; *don't* make bargains over grades; and *don't* lose sight of the big picture. Notably missing from this list are any "dos," but that's not an oversight. I simply have no positive advice to offer, and, if I did, who would want to take advice from someone who committed all those don'ts? All I can say is that, since becoming more cognizant of the strategic dimensions of teaching, my semesters have gone from hellish to pleasant, even enjoyable on occasion. I wouldn't yet describe them as "heavenly," but I'm at least at the level of purgatory.

## **LESSON 1: DON'T LET STUDENTS CALL YOU BY YOUR FIRST NAME**

My first challenge came as a complete surprise. I had written a short e-mail to the undergraduates in my Methods class, and as I approached the end, I realized I didn't know how to sign it. As a teaching assistant in graduate school, I had signed all my e-mails "Andrew," but I was a graduate student then and wasn't much worried about the professional distance between my students and me. Graduate students are still *students* after all—older and wiser than undergraduates, perhaps, but students nonetheless. Now I was a *professor*, and I didn't know how *professors* were supposed to sign their e-mails. Professor Shtulman? Dr. Shtulman? Andrew Shtulman, PhD? I decided to go with what was most familiar—"Andrew"—and thus committed a terrible mistake.

Signing my first name only gave the impression that my students and I were on equal footing—that we were colleagues, collaborators, and even chums. Clearly, I wanted my classroom to have a friendly atmosphere and for students to view me as a friendly person, but I didn't intend to suggest a lack of hierarchy. After all, as instructor, I was charged not only with the "friendly" task of imparting knowledge but also with the not-so-friendly task of providing feedback. And when I

started to provide that feedback—the kind of honest, critical feedback that any good instructor should provide—I saw an immediate backlash in attitudes and behaviors. Friends don't give friends Ds on their papers, or so I've been told.

Not all students that semester gave me grief over their grades, just some. They were a cast of characters I'll call "Greg," "Peter," "Bobby," "Marcia," "Jan," and "Cindy," for the sake of anonymity. The student I'll call Greg was the most troublesome. "Andrew," he said, popping his head around the door to my office, "I have some questions about my grade on assignment 1." Naturally, I had invited this kind of informality in my e-mail, but I hadn't expected it to spill over into face-to-face interactions. In fact, most students had spontaneously addressed me as "Professor Shtulman" or just "Professor" when they realized they couldn't pronounce "Shtulman." Greg, dissatisfied with his grade on assignment 1, had decided to use the informality of being on first-name terms as a kind of weapon. Calling me "Andrew" to my face was a way of cutting me down to size, a way of questioning my authority. And question my authority he did, raising concerns about my grading criteria ("Why did you take off points here?"), my judgment ("Are you sure you read that paragraph?"), and even my credentials ("Have you ever taught before?"). I wanted to smash Greg's hand in the stapler sitting within arm's reach on my desk, but I politely restrained myself.

From that unpleasant interaction onward, I began to sign all class e-mails "Prof. Shtulman." It's become such an ingrained habit that I occasionally sign "Prof. Shtulman" to family and friends, oddly seeming to brag about my credentials in a communication about travel plans or groceries.

I've noticed that most of my colleagues avoid signing their first names as well. If it's not "Professor X," then it's their initials, their last name, or even nothing at all—odd but effective, I suppose. I do know a few colleagues who actively eschew the formality of titles and insist that their students call them by their first name, but I don't know how they navigate the erosion of professional boundaries this practice invites. My guess is they care more about being perceived as cool and would scoff at anyone who used the phrase "professional boundaries" in a sentence about teaching. But that's the burden we uncool professors have to bear.

Signing “Prof. Shtulman” took care of the “Hey, Andrew” problem immediately. I now make a joke of the whole issue on the first day of class. I ask students to introduce themselves, including both their name and nickname. As an example, I announce, “My name is Andrew Shtulman, and my nickname is Professor Shtulman.” I then pause for the laughter that ensues, following it up with “Seriously, if you call me ‘Andrew,’ I’ll break your leg with a steel pipe.” Okay, so I only *think* the latter. But, miraculously, I’ve not had need for steel pipes since my SFH. The precedent I establish on day 1 makes a lasting impression, even among the students whom I eventually come to know very well. I was recently informed by a research assistant that I had (unwittingly) signed an e-mail to another assistant “Andrew,” and the recipient was so surprised that he printed it out and circulated it among his peers, bragging that he and I were on first-name terms. While his gesture was a little pathetic, I was flattered nonetheless.

## LESSON 2: DON'T BE TOO SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR GRADING CRITERIA

Grading is the most thankless part of teaching. We spend hours reading uninspired variations of the same basic response, parsing ungrammatical sentences and incomplete thoughts, all to write comments in the margins that typically go unread. Students who do well rarely thank us for our commendations, but students who do poorly are sure to confront us about our criticisms.

None of this occurred to me, however, when I collected my first stack of papers. I was actually elated that students had unquestioningly completed an assignment of my own devise. Holding those papers made me feel like a “real” teacher, like the class had bought into the idea that I was a genuine authority on research methods. Five minutes later, the dread of grading set in as I suddenly realized two things: (1) I had not budgeted enough time for grading into my weekly schedule; and (2) I had not devised a rubric. I was most concerned about the latter, though not for the reasons you might expect.

I wasn’t concerned that I had failed to disclose my grading criteria up front. I also wasn’t concerned about needing objective criteria to use as *justifications* for my grades—my defense for when the C students

came knocking with torches and pitchforks. Rather, I was terrified by the ambiguity of it all. How was I going to separate the A papers from the B papers from the C papers? Number of words? Cleverness of title? Choice of font? My mother-in-law suggested I “just give them all As,” but that seemed like cheating. I needed to devise a *system*.

The assignment itself was to read two articles—a journal article and a newspaper article reporting on its findings—and assess how well the latter represented the former. I decided that the most efficient way to grade the responses was to first count all the ways that the newspaper article had misrepresented the journal article, and then compare my number to the number that students had identified on their own. I identified a total of six misrepresentations; the students had identified between one and four. My grading woes were thus answered: I’d give the fours an A, the threes a B, the twos a C, and the ones a D, with pluses and minuses thrown in for good measure. The average grade worked out to be a B–, so I was quite satisfied with the result. My satisfaction didn’t last long. After class, a parade of students came to see me during office hours, including the student I mentioned earlier who cried over her low grade. Consoling a weeping student was unpleasant, especially without that damned box of tissues I was advised to buy. But even less pleasant was my interaction with a student I’ll call Peter.

Peter was, by no small coincidence, a good friend of Greg’s. He was bent on challenging *my* interpretation of *his* interpretation of the assignment. Armed with my rubric, he proceeded through it point by point, arguing that he had found all six misrepresentations. He hadn’t by any stretch of the imagination, but that didn’t stop him from lecturing me on my incompetence as a grader for five whole minutes. I had tuned out after thirty seconds, however, my thoughts turning instead to finger-crushing staplers and leg-crushing pipes.

What that interaction taught me was that, regardless of how carefully I grade, I have to be particularly cautious of my grading criteria. If the criteria are too specific, then they are too vulnerable to retort. One solution I toyed with was abandoning the rubric altogether and slapping a single, holistic assessment at the top (as in, “Sorry, Peter, but this paper sucks: D–”). That’s the grading strategy I had encountered most often as an undergraduate (as in, “Wow, Andrew, this paper is amazing: A+”). But it’s not a strategy I felt comfortable with as a professor—at least not for papers.

Grading participation, on the other hand, is better as a holistic assessment. The problem is that participation is hard to break down and quantify. During my SFH, I devised what I thought was a simple and objective solution. Everyday I recorded whether each student was absent (coded as a “0” in my grade book), present but comatose (coded as a “1”), or present and responsive (coded as a “2”). My training as a social scientist appears to have cultivated an obsessive need to quantify human behavior, even when teaching. The procedure took a lot of effort, but the payoff was a concrete distribution of scores that I could turn into a concrete measure of participation. In the syllabus, I had warned that “attendance alone is not sufficient to earn a high participation grade; you must actually *participate* if you hope to earn more than a passing grade,” and, true to my warning, students who came to class but did not actually say anything—that is, the comatose ones—earned grades in the C range.

Once again, my satisfaction fizzled as students who had earned Cs started e-mailing me about their grades. Apparently, students expect that participation grades are always in the A to B range. As one student, who I’ll call Marcia, explained, “I have come across an issue that is very confusing and upsetting to me. I do not see why I have received a 78 in participation, a grade significantly lower than the class average. I feel that to have a grade this much lower than the average I had to have done something counterproductive, or disrupted the class in some way.” Marcia had many ones but few twos in my participation log. She consistently came to class but never said a word. I responded to Marcia’s e-mail by explaining my grading criteria, pointing out that speaking in class is a very modest measure of participation. She responded, “Believe it or not, I did not write to you merely to attempt to gain a change in my grade. I wrote to you because I genuinely do not believe that I was such a significant distance below average in participation and because this calculation seems so subjective I am personally hurt.” I was stunned. How could Marcia interpret this blatantly *objective* calculation as *subjective*? And how could she have failed to realize how *below average* her participation had been?

All the work I had put into devising an objective measure of participation was for naught. Students who received low grades, I realized, would be pissed regardless of how objective it was. So after that semester, I abandoned my fancy algorithm and adopted a much simpler pro-

cedure: I now assign a participation grade between 80 and 100 based solely on a subjective and retrospective assessment, as I suspect most of my colleagues do. It's less objective than my original measure, but it's *perceived* as more objective, so go figure.

### LESSON 3: DON'T OFFER TO READ DRAFTS

About a third of the way into my SFH, Greg and I had another run-in. After receiving “unacceptable” grades on assignments 1 through 3—grades in the B+ to A- range, I should add—Greg decided to take a different tack on assignment 4. This time, he asked if I would review a draft. Though not thrilled by the idea of doing more grading, I couldn't think of any pedagogically sound reason to deny it. It was my job, after all, to help students reach their full potential, and what better way than to provide feedback in the formative stages of their work? Reluctantly, I consented on the provision that he submit his draft at least a week before the final paper was due.

Like clockwork, a draft appeared in my inbox exactly one week before the due date, down to the minute. I thought the early deadline might be prohibitive, but it wasn't to Greg, who seemed hell-bent on getting an A. (Whether he was hell-bent on actually *learning* is another matter.) I opened the draft, made some comments in the margin, and sent it back within the hour. It seemed like an acceptable amount of work for the presumed payoff: a paper from Greg actually worthy of an A and thus a paper he would not bother me about later on.

That payoff was not to come. In the final version, Greg had done virtually nothing to address my concerns. I say *virtually* nothing because he did, in fact, add a couple of words to one paragraph and delete a couple of words from another, but he made no substantive changes to the paper's content or structure. Frustrated by Greg's seemingly willful disregard for my time and effort, I penalized his paper for the unaddressed problems more severely than I penalized other papers containing the same problems but that I had not reviewed earlier. Greg discovered the inequity immediately, having compared his paper to Peter's. He confronted me about it the next day. I explained my reasons for grading his paper more stringently, but he refused to accept them as legitimate. Instead, he repeatedly pointed to the fact that his rough

draft and his final draft were not identical, which “obviously” meant that he had heeded my concerns. Greg was also incensed by the discovery that, in reviewing his final paper, I had noticed an additional problem that I had failed to notice in the draft. I was unaware that I had done so, but I was not apologetic when confronted with the news. “That’s just the nature of the review process,” I explained. “Problems that are overlooked on the first review may very well be discovered on the second.”

Greg never submitted another draft to me. In fact, my intransigence on the issue was sufficiently aversive that he stopped attending office hours altogether. He stuck it to me on my final evaluations, however. I can’t be sure if it was his, but the evaluation with the lowest numerical ratings also contained the following telltale comment: “The instructor discouraged students from seeking help because, if they did, he then held them to a higher standard.” The inanity of the comment speaks for itself. Still, the issue of how to provide formative feedback has plagued me ever since. Now I flat out refuse to read drafts, borrowing a justification from a senior colleague that “if I read a draft, it will turn *your* paper into *our* paper and I can’t be a coauthor on a paper I’m also responsible for grading.” In lieu of reading drafts, I let students know that I’m happy to answer any question at any time, but the only question I get is, “Why did you take off points?” on a paper that’s already been graded. The response that some students seem to be expecting is “It was totally arbitrary” or “Because I hate you as a person,” but that’s only true some of the time.

#### **LESSON 4: DON’T HAND BACK AN EXAM AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**

Handing back an exam at the beginning of class is a rookie mistake, and I’m appalled I committed that mistake not once, not twice, but four times in my SFH. The exams not only distract students from attending to the material de jour, but students who did poorly on the exam will also glower at you for the remainder of class, if they don’t outright revolt.

In my cog psych class, the handing back of exam 2 ended in a revolt. The leader was a student whom I’ll call Cindy. Throughout the semester she had given not-so-subtle clues that she was unhappy with my



instruction, like rolling her eyes at me when I moved through my lecture slides too quickly or attempting to point out inconsistencies between the lecture and the textbook. Early in the semester she came to office hours concerned about the grades she was getting on her papers (all in the B range); she wanted to know what exactly I was looking for. Midway through the meeting, she interjected an odd remark: “You know, Occidental is not the only college I got into. I also got into UCLA.”

“That’s nice,” I said, looking at her quizzically.

“I got into UCLA,” she continued, “because I’m a straight-A student. I don’t get Bs. I’ve never gotten Bs. But for some reason, *in your class*, I’m getting Bs.”

So there it was: Cindy was an intrinsically brilliant student, yet I had failed to glean that fact from her seemingly mediocre papers. I wanted to suggest that she wear a shirt emblazoned with “Straight-A Student”—or perhaps just a large scarlet A—so that no one else might make the same mistake. It wasn’t true, I should add, that I was simply a harsh grader. A full third of the class had received As on the same assignments for which Cindy had received Bs. Cindy’s papers were just not that good.

To help Cindy see the difference between her papers and the A papers, I printed one out and encouraged her to read it right then and there. She agreed that it was better than hers but maintained that hers was still A-level work. There was just no reasoning with Cindy. Unfortunately for Cindy (and me) she earned a C on exam 2. When I handed back the exams at the beginning of class, Cindy immediately tore into me, barking questions like “Why isn’t C a correct answer to number 17?!” and “What exactly were you looking for in the third essay?!” Another student, whom I’ll call Bobby, became emboldened by the outburst and joined in. Bobby had earned a D, making Cindy and him the poorest performers on the exam. But neither of them realized that. Rather, they assumed that everyone had done poorly and that the exam was thus flawed. Indeed, the flavor of their accusations quickly turned ugly. Cindy claimed my exams were too arbitrary (“You ask too many questions about unimportant details!”), and Bobby claimed they were too restrictive (“You don’t give us the freedom to demonstrate our knowledge in our own way!”). This fifteen-minute outburst rendered the remaining forty minutes of class tense and awkward, not to mention

the remaining four weeks of the semester. None of the other students joined in the smear campaign, but they were clearly affected by it. The class dynamic was irreparably altered.

To my surprise, Bobby sent an apologetic e-mail that evening, stating, “I didn’t mean to come down on you at all today in class. My frustration has a lot more to do with my major on the whole than with the score I got on the test.” Fair enough, but I would have preferred that my very *public* shaming were followed by a very *public* apology, perhaps in the form of a muffin basket presented in front of the entire class. Cindy, on the other hand, never apologized. She remained angry and sullen for the rest of the semester. Somehow, despite the fact that my exams were inherently flawed, she managed to earn an A+ on the final and, as a result, an A– in the course as a whole. Nevertheless, she refused to make eye contact with me the following semester when we encountered each other in passing.

Now I proactively avoid such wrath by handing back exams not only at the end of class but also with some statistical information about how the class did as a whole. Students who scored abnormally low thus *know* they’ve scored abnormally low, and they’re thus much less inclined to make a fuss. It’s hard to argue, after all, that an exam was inherently flawed when you’re the only one who bombed it.

## LESSON 5: DON’T MAKE BARGAINS OVER GRADES

Around the time of the Cindy-Bobby revolt, I handed back the second exam in my other class. It was not met with ire—at least not any overt ire—but it did bring one student to tears. That student, whom I’ll call Jan, received the lowest grade in class (D–), which caused her to run out of the room sobbing, followed soon after by two girls who consoled her in the hall. I had expected displeasure from Jan, but I hadn’t expected such *devastation*. In retrospect, I think Jan’s theatrics were mainly for my benefit. Jan, it turns out, had a favor to ask at my next block of office hours. She wanted to be excused from answering all the math-based questions on the final exam. “I have a learning disability,” she explained. “It wasn’t an issue during the first exam because we hadn’t covered anything involving numbers. But now that we’re onto statistics, I’m having a lot of trouble.”

“I see,” I responded. “That would explain why you did so much better on the first exam than the second. What exactly is the nature of your learning disability?”

“I can’t do math,” she said.

“You can’t do math?”

“No, I just can’t do it. Anything with numbers confuses me. So I was wondering if, on account of my learning disability, I could just skip the statistics part of the final exam.”

I explained to Jan that allowing her to skip a portion of the final exam would be unfair to the rest of the class, and I urged her to try her best at mastering the new material. That material was, after all, foundational to the follow-up course, Statistics, which was required for the major. Jan thanked me for my advice, but she left my office undeterred. Within a week, she had set up a meeting with the school’s learning disabilities specialist and requested my presence.

The meeting was brief but memorable. The specialist confirmed that Jan did, indeed, have a learning disability and that I was obligated to make accommodations for her. When I asked the specialist what accommodations would be appropriate, she was unable—or unwilling—to make any specific recommendations. “That’s up to you,” she said. “You obviously know your course better than I do.” I left that meeting quite perturbed, but Jan left seemingly uplifted. The specialist had not only legitimized her request but had placed the burden of how to accommodate Jan’s learning disability squarely on my shoulders.

Sadly, I’ve now come to expect this burden as a regular part of teaching, most frequently incurred in the form of a cookie-cutter e-mail from the Office of the Dean of Students that reads,

On [fill in the date], our office received documentation verifying that [fill in the name] had a temporary health condition in which a medical professional advised [him/her] to rest one to three days. Due to these instructions for care, this student might not have attended class during this time frame. To be clear, professors have the final decision on allowing students to complete missed assignments at a later time. However, given the nature of the student’s absence, we encourage you to work with the student if possible.

Believe it or not, I get this e-mail about once a week. Being asked to adjust your teaching schedule and your grading requirements on a

weekly basis can take its toll. My interpretation of the e-mail has thus become quite jaded, namely,

Professor, we know you retain ultimate jurisdiction over your course, but don't be a dick. [Fill in the name] is special. Yes, it's true that other students in your course are likely suffering from similar afflictions, but those students did not have the gumption to seek out a formal request to shirk their responsibility. Please accommodate [fill in the name]'s request or you will be hearing from us again.

I didn't used to feel this way, but two experiences have changed my outlook. First, I've noticed that a disproportionate number of these notifications come on behalf of students whom I've independently verified as entitled and discourteous—that is, the Gregs and the Cindys of my classes. Second, when I consult with students on how to account for their tardy papers or missed exams, a good number offer the suggestion that the assignment be dropped altogether. That is, they don't want to make up the points; they want to pretend that the points were never lost in the first place.

And that's what Jan had requested. After our meeting with the learning disabilities specialist, she raised the possibility of skipping the math questions a second time, and when I balked once again, she raised a slightly different possibility: "What if I answer all the questions but if I do really bad on the math questions, you'll drop them from my grade?" At first, this new proposal struck me as equally repugnant, but on further reflection, I realized that it might serve to quell Jan's math anxiety without actually affecting her grade. Jan's poor performance on exam 2 was not, after all, due to the math questions. Jan had performed poorly on the entire exam, but her math anxiety led her to believe that the math questions were her one and only problem. I thus conceded to Jan's request, only to quickly regret it. Her performance on the final was much worse than her performance on exam 2. She answered almost every math question wrong. In fact, she was so consistently wrong that she would have done better if she had selected her answers at random. Apparently, Jan had decided to blow off the math-based material, since not knowing it wouldn't affect her grade. But she clearly studied the other material because her performance on the rest of the exam was stellar. Adding insult to injury, I later discovered an unsettling comment on my teaching evaluations, most certainly made by Jan: "The

professor had little knowledge of how to deal with a student with a learning disability. He was unhelpful when I visited him in office hours to ask for assistance.” To this day, the whole incident leaves a bad taste in my mouth, but I doubt that Jan has given it a second thought.

## LESSON 6: DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG PICTURE

Around the time of the Cindy-Bobby revolt and Jan's breakdown, my morale dropped precipitously. I began procrastinating from my teaching duties by searching for other jobs. I had had enough. Difficult students were one thing. But what drove me over the edge was dealing with those students *on top of* being exhausted from prepping six new lectures each week and grading two new assignments every other week. My schedule was packed. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays were devoted to teaching and meetings; Tuesdays and Thursdays were devoted to prepping and grading. Research fell entirely by the wayside, which became yet another source of frustration.

The schedule might have been manageable if I weren't also swamped at home, raising a two-year-old child with a spouse whose job was as equally stressful as mine. All three of us were struggling with new transitions, and I just didn't have the stamina to deal with classroom management issues on top of my other responsibilities. What I failed to realize, however, was how inconsequential those issues really were. In time I would stop waking up on Monday thinking, *How the hell am I going to fill six hours of class time?!*

The only lasting outcome of poorly managing my classroom that semester was a handful of negative teaching evaluations and two handfuls of bad memories, which, on the flip side, make good anecdotes at cocktail parties. Negative teaching evaluations are perhaps more problematic for me, on the tenure track at a liberal arts institution (where teaching is taken quite seriously), than for someone on the tenure track at an R1 institution. Still, every negative evaluation was accompanied by three to four positive evaluations, which begs the question of whether the negative ones should be trusted at all.

“It's good to reflect critically on your evaluations,” a senior colleague once told me. “But don't let a bunch of eighteen-year-olds dictate what you do in your class. Kids that age don't have enough judgment to be

allowed to buy alcohol or rent a car.” My colleague’s advice was comforting, but it didn’t change the fact that these “irresponsible” eighteen-year-olds had the power to shape my tenure case.

It’s hard not to begin viewing your students as your clients, or even as your boss. But to do so is, of course, a huge mistake. The only degree that faculty and students share in common is a high school diploma, and this gap in education and experience counts for much more than most students—and even some faculty—are willing to acknowledge. It’s a gap that only truly becomes apparent to us all during commencement, when the graduating seniors don black, shapeless robes but the faculty don bright, colorful regalia, replete with ornate embroidery and a big poofy hat.

“Nice robes!” a graduating senior once shouted to me while waiting in line to receive his degree. “How do I get me some?”

“Five to ten years of graduate education,” I shouted back. He snickered, seemingly oblivious to the demands of graduate school.

I was well aware of those demands coming into my SFH, yet one week in the classroom with a handful of discourteous students had somehow caused me to lose sight of all that I had achieved. I’ve now regained the confidence I lost during my SFH, but it hasn’t been easy. Despite hopes that the worst bunch was behind me, the Gregs, Cindys, and Jans have persisted. They start with small requests, like granting an extension on a paper, and quickly move to larger requests, like postponing an exam, but I’m getting better at cultivating an air of authority that keeps such requests to a minimum.

Sometimes I think it would be simpler to just wear my regalia all year round, as a constant reminder of who’s the boss. But doing so would be hot and uncomfortable in the Southern California sun. Maybe I’ll just take to wearing the poofy hat instead.